

CHRIST IN THE TABERNACLE

by

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE MERCY SEAT

Christ — Our God at “The Throne of Grace”

Exodus 25:10-22; 37:19; 40:3, 20, 21; Numbers 4:5, 6

THE ARK of the covenant was a chest made of acacia wood, covered inside and out with gold, over which was a lid or covering of pure gold, called the mercy seat.

We must think of the ark and the mercy seat as one; for together they made the only piece of furniture in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish tabernacle. Above the mercy seat God dwelt in the pillar of cloud and fire, “**in the midst**” of His people, Israel.

Into the Holy of Holies the high priest went only once a year, there to represent his people in communion with God; but into that Most Holy Place Aaron dared not go without blood, which he sprinkled on and before the mercy seat; for he could commune with a holy God only on the basis of the shed blood, a foreshadowing of the Saviour who was to come, even the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is a wonderful lesson which we have before us, a lesson in which the glories of our Lord Jesus shine forth in unspeakable beauty. He Himself is the ark; and He is the mercy seat; for He is our God before “**the throne of grace.**”

Within the golden-covered ark of the covenant were the Ten Commandments, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded — graphic pictures of Christ’s keeping God’s law unbroken within His heart; Christ, the pilgrim’s daily Bread of Life; and Christ, our Great High Priest, “**called of God, a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.**”

All of these rich and meaningful truths we shall consider in our study today; but even before we begin to read the Scripture in the lesson before us, let us realize that we are entering, by faith, into the Holy of Holies, even heaven itself, there to behold our risen and glorified Lord.

And as we enter there, we recall God’s words to Moses at the burning bush,

“**Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground**” (Exodus 3:5).

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE MERCY SEAT IN THE HOLY OF HOLIES

1. The Holy of Holies — A Room Foursquare.

In an earlier lesson we found that the Holy Place was twice as long as it was wide; and that the Holy of Holies was a perfect cube, as wide as it was long as it was high. It was a foursquare room; and in it was only the one article — the Ark of the Covenant with its mercy seat of gold.

As Aaron entered this, God's dwelling place among His people, he beheld a scene of awe-inspiring beauty.

- He saw the Shekinah Glory between the cherubim of gold that formed a part of the mercy seat.
- He saw upon the mercy seat the sprinkled blood.
- He looked around him, and saw the walls of gold; for the boards which made the walls were covered over with gold.
- He looked above him and at the beautiful veil,
- He beheld the figures of cherubim embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet upon the fine twined linen.

All was glory and beauty. And there, on the great Day of Atonement, he communed with God. In his hand he held the golden censer, while above the mercy seat the fragrant incense went up before the Lord in a cloud of smoke.

It is not mere fancy or speculation that prompts us to say that this foursquare room, called the Holy of Holies, was a type of heaven itself, that “**city foursquare.**” Repeatedly in the Epistle to the Hebrews we read the Holy Spirit's clear interpretation of its typical significance.

Here are a few of the passages that are unmistakable:

“We . . . have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec” (Hebrews 6:18-20).

“We have such an high priest . . . a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1, 2).

“The first tabernacle was . . . a figure for the time then present . . . But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Hebrews 9:8-12).

“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens [the Most Holy Place was a ‘pattern’ of heaven itself] should be purified with these [i. e., with the blood sacrifices], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy Places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; ut into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world [age] hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Hebrews 9:23-26).

This is the Holy Spirit’s commentary upon the typical significance of the Most Holy Place, into which the high priest in Israel could enter but once a year, not without blood. It is a clear, irrefutable explanation which the Spirit of God gives us in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The Holy of Holies was a type of heaven itself; the high priest who ministered there, a prophetic picture of Christ, our Great High Priest before **“the throne of grace.”** All was glory and beauty in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish tabernacle. All is glory and beauty in that **“city . . . foursquare,”** that city **“which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”** (Revelation 21:16; Hebrews 11:10).

“The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal . . . The wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones . . . And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass” (Revelation 21:16-21).

Dear Christian friend, there is a real place called heaven. Jesus, our Great High Priest, is there to intercede for us before **“the throne of grace,”** His own blood having paid the price of our redemption **“once for all.”**

And today, as we look into the Most Holy Place of the Jewish tabernacle, verily we are treading upon holy ground; for that sanctuary was but a **“pattern”** of the New Jerusalem, of which the much loved hymn speaks:

“In the land of fadeless day
Lies ‘the city foursquare’;
It shall never pass away,
And there is ‘no night there.’”

2. The Shekinah Glory — “The Light Thereof.”

There was no window in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish tabernacle; the Shekinah Glory, even the pillar of cloud and fire, was **“the light thereof.”** There was no candlestick, as in the Holy Place. Only **“the God of glory,”** above the mercy seat and between the cherubim of gold, shone forth in His uncreated beauty.

As the aged John saw the vision of the celestial city many centuries ago, he wrote, saying,

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof . . . there shall be no night there.”

There was no artificial light in the Holy of Holies of the Jewish tabernacle; and there will be no artificial light in heaven. When Peter, James, and John saw the face of our Lord transfigured on the mountain, they bore witness that it **“did shine as the sun”** (Matthew 17:2). When John saw the risen Lord on the Isle of Patmos, he also testified saying that, **“His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength”** (Revelation 1:16). The **“eternal glory”** which He had with the Father **“before the world was”** shines from within His very Being, and fills heaven with its light. By His grace, we shall one day behold and share His glory; and **“we shall be like him”**! He has gone **“to prepare a place”** for us — and what a glorious place it is, and will be for all eternity!

“There they need no sunshine bright,
In that ‘city foursquare’;
For the Lamb is all the light,
And there is ‘no night there.’”

3. *“A Shadow of the Cross.”*

The Ark of the Covenant and the blood-sprinkled mercy seat formed the sixth and last piece of furniture to complete the “shadow of the cross,” made by the God-given arrangement of the sacred things in the Jewish tabernacle and in the outer court.

Within the ark was the holy law of God, broken already by Israel, but ever kept unbroken by the Son of God. Upon the mercy seat was the sprinkled blood; otherwise, this **“throne of grace”** would have been a judgment throne; for it was, indeed, God’s throne. But for Calvary, no sinner could stand in the presence of a holy God; but because of Calvary, we shall stand before Him forever, unashamed and unafraid, because we shall be clothed in His righteousness, made fit to live before Him by faith in His shed blood.

In that heavenly city, of which the Most Holy Place was but a shadow, we shall ever behold the print of the nails in the hands and feet of the Lamb upon the throne. We shall see the wounded side. But the Lamb of God is also the righteous King, the **“Lion of the tribe of Judah,” “King of kings, and Lord of lords.”**

No more does He have to suffer shame and humiliation and sorrow. He is the glorified Lord Jesus. Never again will He be the **“Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” “He is risen!”**

He ever liveth in power and great glory, yet He will ever bear the marks of Calvary, blessed reminder of the awful price He paid for our redemption. He has forever satisfied the righteous demands of a holy God. That is the message of the sprinkled blood on and before the mercy seat.

Those were wonderful lessons which the Lord God was teaching His ancient people, Israel, in the wilderness, as they saw the shadow of the cross, not only in each piece of furniture, and in all the materials which went into the making of the Jewish tabernacle; but also in the very arrangement of the articles in the “**pattern**” which God gave to Moses in Mount Sinai.

As we take a backward glance, over the path we travelled in our studies of these sacred things, we see the whole, beautiful picture, doubtless with a much clearer vision than did Israel some fifteen hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem; for we have the Holy Spirit’s exposition of these things in the New Testament.

Now let us take once more a bird’s eye view of these six pieces of furniture, which were placed by Moses in the tabernacle and in the outer court:

As the sinner entered the gate of the outer court, he brought his animal sacrifice, which pointed on to Christ, “the Lamb of God”. As the priest went on toward the Holy Place, he washed his hands and feet at the brazen laver, prophetic of Christ’s cleansing, His believer-priests before they might minister for Him or have fellowship with Him.

Once inside the sanctuary, the priest saw on his left the beautiful golden candlestick, eloquent picture of the union between Christ, the Light of the world, and His believer-priests, “lights in the world” for His name’s sake. On the right, the priest saw the golden-covered table of shewbread, prophetic of Christ, the “Bread of Life,” upon whom the believer-priest feeds, and upon whom the Father always feasts His righteous soul.

Before him, just in front of the veil, the priest saw the golden altar; there Aaron burned the fragrant incense, beautiful picture of Christ, our Intercessor and “Advocate with the Father.” And within the veil, the high priest beheld the glory of God above the mercy seat, between the cherubim of gold. God’s holiness was satisfied because upon the throne, which hid from view the law, was the sprinkled blood.

When Christ was crucified, God’s righteous law was vindicated and magnified; His justice was satisfied; His holiness and His mercy were reconciled; He was glorified; and the sinner was justified — all by His own grace. What “**a shadow of good things to come**”!

What “Glories of Christ As Foreshadowed in the Jewish Tabernacle”!

4. The Sacredness of the Ark and the Mercy Seat.

Some thing of God’s estimate of the sacredness of the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat is seen in the following facts concerning them:

(1) They were the first articles — yet one piece of furniture — which God described in the Exodus record.

(2) Only the high priest could see them — and that but once a year, on the Day of Atonement.

(3) Before the Kohathites, one of the three families of the Levites, could carry the ark on the march, Aaron covered it with the beautiful veil, over which he placed another covering of badgers' skins, or seal skins; and above that, a "**cloth wholly of blue**" (Numbers 4:46, 15, 20). Of course, it was carried by the gold-covered staves, as were other articles of furniture.

(4) The ark, with its mercy seat, was the only article from the Jewish tabernacle to be placed in Solomon's temple some 480 years after the tabernacle in the wilderness was finished. Vessels of greater beauty and glory took the place of the other pieces of furniture; but the ark was put in the Holy of Holies of the beautiful temple built by Solomon, the king.

For very significant reasons, which we shall consider a bit later, the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded were not in the ark when it was put in the temple; they had served their purpose during the wilderness wanderings. Neither were the staves left in the golden rings when the ark was put in Solomon's temple; the pilgrimage was over.

But the two tables of stone, upon which the Ten Commandments were written "**with the finger of God,**" were kept in the ark, beneath the mercy seat, beneath the sprinkled blood, in the Most Holy Place of Solomon's temple, as in the tabernacle in the wilderness.

Tragic, historic incidents, brought about by sin, were connected with the ark during Israel's later history. These, too, we shall consider briefly in this lesson; for they illustrate God's value of this sacred chest with its mercy seat of pure gold. It was not to be handled carelessly; it was not to be gazed upon by curious eyes; it was holy unto the Lord. It foreshadowed Christ, our God at "**the throne of grace.**"

In order to get the clearest picture of the ark and the mercy seat, together with their typical teaching, we need to consider each one separately and in some detail.

Yet we must be careful not to think of them as two separate articles; they were one, with one perfect message — the golden-covered chest with its mercy seat of pure gold.

THE ARK — A TYPE OF CHRIST — BOTH HUMAN AND DIVINE

The two materials that went into the making of the Ark of the Covenant foreshadowed our Lord's twofold nature — both human and divine. This we have seen repeatedly in our study of the boards of the tabernacle, in the table of shewbread, and in the golden altar of incense.

- The incorruptible wood speaks to us of His sinless humanity;
- The gold, of His eternal deity.

The wood was overlaid with gold "**within**" and "**without,**" while the acacia wood gave form to the ark. The human eye could see only the gold; no wood was visible. Thus our Lord's humanity gave Him the form in which He lived upon earth, is now, and ever shall be — the "**Man Christ Jesus.**"

He was the Creator; “**by him all things were made**”; but He, “**being in the form of God, thought it not robbery** [i. e., ‘a thing to be grasped after’] **to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**” (Philippians 2:68). For all eternity He will be the “**Man Christ Jesus.**”

And yet we observe how sacredly our Lord guards us from having a low view of this Most Holy One. The gold covers all. Just as the ark was overlaid, within and without, with gold; so also every act and every characteristic of the Son of Man reflects His divine glory.

Behold Him; gaze upon His majesty — as far as finite minds and hearts can gaze; all is divine. His deity is displayed over “**the form of a servant.**” And wherever the all-seeing eye of His Father rests, within that pure and holy mind of the “**only begotten Son,**” within His secret thoughts and affections and will — all is holy and perfect and divine.

The thoughts and intents of the heart of the Son of God; as well as His blameless walk among men, His meekness and obedience to His Father’s will show forth His deity in terms that men, angels, or demons cannot refute. The Father acknowledged Him as His equal, coeternal Son. With all the realities of human nature, sin apart; with all His dependence upon His Father’s will; the gold was ever there, pure, untarnished gold.

Although He was both human and divine; yet He was and is and ever will be one Person; for “**God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself**” (II Corinthians 5:19).

- He was weary; yet He is our Refuge and Rest.
- He was thirsty at Jacob’s well; yet He freely gives the living water.
- He was asleep on a pillow in the bottom of the boat; yet He arose to still the storm.
- He was hungry; yet He is the Bread of Life.
- He wept at the tomb of Lazarus, over His beloved city, and in Gethsemane’s garden; yet He alone can dry our tears.
- He alone can raise the dead.
- Because “**he suffered being tempted,**” He is our sympathetic Saviour.
- Because He is “**the mighty God,**” He has “**all power in heaven and in earth.**”

And of this blessed truth the incorruptible wood and the gold in the ark of the covenant speak.

As the Scriptures listed at the beginning of this lesson tell us, the ark of the covenant was two and one-half cubits long, one-half cubit wide, and one-half cubit high. There was “**upon it a crown of gold round about.**” And four rings of gold held the staves, which were made of acacia wood, covered with gold. These staves were “in the four feet” of the ark. As long as Israel journeyed in the wilderness, the staves were not to be removed from the rings. By these the ark was carried, and they indicated that the pilgrim walk was not over.

Within the ark was “**the testimony**” which God gave Moses on Mount Sinai, written on two tables of stone.

There also were the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod that budded and bore almond blossoms over night. (See Exodus 25:10-16; 16:32-36; Numbers 17:1-12; cf. Numbers 16:150; Hebrews 9:3, 4).

Such is the Holy Spirit's description of the Ark of the Covenant, prophetic of our Lord Jesus Himself. In His heart He kept God's holy law unbroken. He is, indeed, Manna to our souls. And He is God's chosen Priest, ever living to intercede for His own before "**the throne of grace.**" He could be and do all of this because He was and is both human and divine.

As we have often said, God cannot die; and in order to bear "**our sins in his own body on the tree,**" He had to become a Man. That is why He said to the Father, as recorded by David a thousand years before He was born in Bethlehem, "**A body hast thou prepared me**" (Hebrews 10:57; cf. Psalm 40:68). In that "**prepared body**" He came to do His Father's will, as this same passage tells us:

"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) To do thy will, O God."

Because He delighted to do His Father's will, because He could not sin, He was worthy to be a perfect Sacrifice, the sinner's Substitute upon the altar, which is Calvary's cross. Thus He became the heavenly Manna to our heart-hungry souls; and thus He became in His death and resurrection our ever-living Priest.

This is the message of the golden-covered Ark of the Covenant.

THE MERCY SEAT — A TYPE OF CHRIST, OUR "THRONE OF GRACE"

The mercy seat was made of "**pure gold,**" two and one-half cubits long and one and one-half cubits wide — just to fit the top of the ark of the covenant.

"In the two ends of the mercy seat" were two cherubim of gold, "**one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end.**" These angelic figures of gold were "**beaten out of one piece,**" from the mercy seat itself; indeed, they were a part of this precious covering for the Ark of the Covenant. (See Exodus 25:17-22; 37: 69).

Thus the cherubim were not separate from, or attached to, the mercy seat in an artificial union; they were "**beaten out of one piece,**" even out of the mercy seat itself. All was one piece of pure gold.

The cherubim faced each other; and, with their wings stretched forth "**on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings,**" they were looking down upon the sprinkled blood; for we read the God-given instructions concerning them:

“Their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be” (Exodus 25:20).

Moreover, God said to Moses,

“There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 25:22).

From this and related passages of Scripture, it is clear that the mercy seat was God’s throne, the place where He met with the representative of His people, and communed with him. This truth becomes increasingly clear to us as we examine, in some detail, the significance of this mercy seat of pure gold. It was:

1. The Only Seat in the Jewish Tabernacle.

There was no chair for the priests. Their work was never done. They continued to stand **“daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which”** could **“never take away sins”** (Hebrews 10:11).

The only seat in the tabernacle was God’s throne, where **“mercy reigned.”** It reigned because our holy God had planned, from all eternity, to offer Himself a perfect Sacrifice for sin **“once for all.”** **“When the fulness of the time was come,”** He let wicked men crucify Him on the cross. Having paid the penalty for sin, He cried out in triumph, **“It is finished.”** Then He yielded His Spirit up to the Father.

Three days and three nights He lay in Joseph’s new tomb, but His **“flesh”** saw **“no corruption.”** And then He arose, victorious over death and the grave. For forty days He showed Himself alive to those who loved Him, **“by many infallible proofs”** convincing His disciples that He was alive forevermore. He ascended into heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

That is why the Holy Spirit wrote of Him,

“This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:12).

His redemptive work was forever finished; therefore, He sat down, to wait until His enemies should be made His **“footstool.”**

2. Not a Throne of Judgment, but a “Throne of Grace.”

“Mercy reigned” in the Holy of Holies, and **“mercy”** signifies grace bestowed upon the unworthy and the undeserving. It is unmerited favor. Man had sinned. He had broken God’s holy law.

Even while Moses was in the mount, Israel was dancing, naked, around a golden calf, in gross idolatry — all this in spite of the fact that it had been only a little while since God had miraculously redeemed His people from Egyptian bondage! Israel had broken the very first commandment, to say nothing of the others.

Beneath the mercy seat were the tables of stone. Above it was the Shekinah glory. God's righteousness demanded death of the guilty sinner; for **“the wages of sin is death”** (Romans 6:23). But, because of the sprinkled blood, His judgment throne had become a **“throne of grace,”** a veritable mercy seat; for the sprinkled blood was but a foreshadowing of the cleansing blood of Jesus, **“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”** (John 1:29).

3. Christ — Our **“Mercy Seat.”**

That Christ Himself is the true Mercy Seat, is found in the fact that the very term means *“place of propitiation”* (Hebrews 9:5). And in Romans 3:24, 25 (cf. Romans 3:21-26) we read that we have been —

“. . . justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”

Christ Himself was our propitiatory Sacrifice on Calvary's cross.

We deserved the death penalty, everlasting separation from God. But, by His grace, He kept the law unbroken for us, and died in our place, bearing **“the iniquity of us all”** in His **“own body on the tree.”** The blood of the animal sacrifice, sprinkled upon the mercy seat, was a mere shadow or type of His own precious blood. And Israel's faith in the promised Redeemer enabled God to forgive their sins — as it were, on a credit, looking forward to the one perfect, all-sufficient Sacrifice.

The *Scofield Reference Bible* has a helpful footnote on this matter, in connection with the verse we have just read in Romans 3:25; we quote a part of it here:

“In fulfillment of the type, Christ is Himself . . . ‘that which propitiates’ . . . and ‘the place of propitiation’ — the mercy seat sprinkled with His own blood — the token that in our stead He so honored the law by enduring its righteous sentence that God, who ever foresaw the cross, is vindicated in having ‘passed over’ sins from Adam to Moses (Romans 5:13) and the sins of believers under the old covenant . . . and just in justifying sinners under the new covenant. There is no thought in propitiation of placating a vengeful God, but of doing right by His holy law and so making it possible for Him righteously to show mercy.”

Because the mercy seat was of pure gold, it was a further type of our Lord; for the **“pure gold”** of His deity and glory shines forth from His very Being, as well as from His mighty works and profound teachings. It is to Him that we go with our prayers — before the very **“throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”** (Hebrews 4:16).

4. The Mercy Seat — The Throne of a Holy God.

God told Moses to make the two cherubim of gold upon the mercy seat to symbolize, we believe, His holiness and majesty. Cherubim, in the Scriptures, seem to be “*angelic beings*,” who “*have to do with the vindication of the holiness of God as against the presumptuous pride of sinful man*.”

The golden cherubim upon the mercy seat could not be separated from that “**throne of grace**”; for, as we have seen, they were “**beaten out**” from truth that God’s mercy cannot be separated from His holiness and justice. Reverently speaking, He could not save the sinner at the cost of His own righteousness and holiness. That is why, in the Person of His Son, He had to die in the sinner’s place, as the sinner’s Substitute. That is why the Psalmist could say, as he looked forward to Calvary’s cross,

“Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other”
(Psalm 85:10).

The cherubim of gold stood above the holy law of God; the Shekinah glory stood between the cherubim, above the law, which Israel had broken; but beneath the cherubim and the Shekinah glory was the sprinkled blood — upon the mercy seat! God did not set aside His holiness and His justice in redeeming sinful man; He Himself took the sinner’s place. Thus His holiness and His righteousness were fully satisfied.

Our first glimpse of the cherubim, in the Scriptures, is that of their being placed by the Lord “**at the east of the garden of Eden**” with a “**flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life**” (Genesis 3:24). Man had sinned. God, in judgment, had to drive him out of Eden, lest he eat “**the tree of life**” while yet in his sinful state, and live forever in wretchedness and misery, unredeemed.

It was mercy, as well as judgment, that drove man out of Eden; let us not forget that!

And at the east of the garden God placed the cherubim, to guard His holiness and majesty and righteousness. The sword of vengeance against sin kept “**the way of the tree of life**.” Every avenue of approach to the original, happy state that Adam had enjoyed was closed. The Word and majesty of God had been trifled with and despised. Therefore, the cherubim took their stand as the avengers of God’s unsullied holiness, as the stern proof that man was an outcast, banished by God from the happy place called Eden. Humanly speaking, there was no way to return to the tree of life.

This significant place of the cherubim, of itself, manifests the hopelessness of any attempt on the part of man to regain life by his own efforts. Unless the glory of God is met; unless the flaming sword of vengeance and holiness is satisfied; it is vain for man to hope for “*Paradise Regained*.”

The cherubim of the Holy Place teach us the same solemn lesson. They guarded the way to God while the veil was unrent.

The law demanded the death of the offender; but above the law stood the cherubim, no longer barring man's approach to life, but with outstretched wings above the place of mercy. The sprinkled blood prefigured the sword of justice which was to do its work as it was to be sheathed in the side of the Son of God!

The blood upon the mercy seat satisfied the holiness of God. That is why the cherubim were no longer connected with the flaming sword; their faces were now intently turned toward the **"throne of grace."** Their eyes looked down upon the blood which foreshadowed the death of the Substitute who was to come.

Well, indeed, it is for the world that the faces of the cherubim are turned to the place of mercy. It will not always be so. One day their faces will once more turn toward the earth. They will look upon a world where the majesty and glory and truth of God have been despised, where even His grace and mercy have been rejected, where **"the God of all grace"** was thrust out at the point of a spear.

In that coming day the power and glory of our Lord will be manifest to all God's universe. Christ will come to **"avenge His elect,"** to tread **"the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God"** against Satan and sin and rebellious man. (See Revelation 19:15).

Then the mercy seat will be taken from the ark of the covenant, as it were; and the law will demand the death of every Christ-rejecting sinner, of every soul which has spurned the love and grace of a holy, but merciful God. Then the Lord, who dwelleth **"between the cherubims"** will put down all unrighteousness and sin. (See Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Isaiah 37:16; II Samuel 6:2; II Kings 19:15).

5. A Blood-Sprinkled Mercy Seat.

Aaron could see the mercy seat only after he had offered the sacrifice upon the brazen altar, even as our holy God can let us approach His Presence only upon the basis of the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without the shed blood of the Son of God, there could be no communion, no fellowship, between God and His sinning creatures. But Christ has **"entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us"** (Hebrews 9:12).

Many Bible students believe that this is what the risen Lord meant when He said to Mary Magdalene upon the morning of His resurrection,

"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father . . ." (John 20:17).

Later in the same day He told the disciples to **"handle"** Him and see that His resurrection body was real, that it was of **"flesh and bones"**; to behold His pierced hands and feet. (See Luke 24:39, 40).

It seems that, between His appearance first to Mary and later to His disciples, He must have ascended unto His Father, to present the blood before the **"throne of grace."**

Certainly this interpretation is in accordance with the type, set forth in the great Day of Atonement in Israel. That is why God's judgment throne could become a "**throne of grace.**"

The atoning blood of Christ covers all our guilt! What a mercy seat!

Little wonder the hymn writer gave us those immortal lines:

“From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat;
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.

“There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads,
A place than all beside more sweet;
It is the blood-bought mercy seat.

“There is a scene where spirits blend,
Where friend holds fellowship with friend;
Though sundered far, by faith they meet
Around one common mercy seat.

“Ah! whither could we flee for aid,
When tempted, desolate, dismayed?
Or how the hosts of hell defeat,
Had suffering saints no mercy seat?

“There, there, on eagle wings we soar;
And sin and sense seem all no more;
And heaven comes down, our souls to meet;
And glory crowns the mercy seat.”

THE LAW WITHIN THE ARK A TYPE OF GOD'S LAW IN THE HEART OF CHRIST

In our study today we have referred, from time to time, to the very important fact that in the ark Israel's treasures were hidden: the covenant of their relationship with God, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod.

All these treasures were laid up before the Lord in the Ark of the Covenant. The realities, which these priceless possessions foreshadowed, are found in our Lord Jesus Christ, for in Him **“are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge”** (Colossians 2:3). In Him unsearchable riches are kept against all the cunning of Satan, and against all the weakness of the believer.

Now Israel's treasures so definitely foreshadowed our Lord, in His Person and work, that we want to give further emphasis to their importance by a special glance at each one separately.

First of all, it was in the ark that the law was hidden, its mouth stopped, its demands silenced by the payment of the sinner's debt; for in Christ is hid our complete justification from all things before a holy God, from which we **"could not be justified by the law of Moses"** (Acts 13:39).

1. The Law Was Kept Unbroken in the Ark.

To understand better the significance of Christ's keeping the holy law of God unbroken, let us go back to Israel's earlier history. God had dealt with Abraham upon the ground of unconditional grace; for His promises and His grace go together. Promise is the simple expression of God's own will and intentions, and its accomplishment rests solely upon His power and unchangeableness. That is why justification before God requires nothing on man's part, but simple faith. Abraham had taken the ground of a guilty sinner before a gracious God.

Up to the time of Israel's arrival at Mount Sinai, God had dealt with His people upon the ground of unconditional grace.

- He fed them with manna.
- He sent the quail for them to eat.
- He gave them water out of the rock

To say nothing of His previous deliverance from the cruel lash of the Egyptian task master and from the waters of the Red Sea. Though, from the beginning, the Israelites were a stiff-necked and murmuring people; yet God could bless them, because they were standing in simple dependence upon His grace.

Then at Sinai Israel presumptuously asked for the law in ignorance and spiritual pride, she said she would do all the law required — in ignorance of her sin, in spiritual pride, unmindful of her guilt and weakness. Once the covenant was made, no one could annul it. It was a covenant which bound Israel to perfect obedience, and which bound God to punish disobedience. It was a covenant which rested, for the performance of its terms, upon Israel's own faithfulness and strength; a covenant in which God had nothing to do, so to speak, but to watch the results of their actions and to deal with them accordingly.

And what was Israel? They were a nation of poor, lost sinners at the very outset, who could act only in the way of sin. Doubtless it sounded well in the ears of men when they uttered the resolutions to obey God, and to make their relationship to Him depend upon their own efforts. Yet what was it in reality but the expression of their ignorance of God's righteousness and of their own helplessness and ruined condition?

What was it but a proof that sin had so blinded their eyes that they were unable to discern their own hopeless state? They supposed themselves able to obey, whereas they were in the helplessness of death. And does not many a good resolution, even at this present day, my friend, manifest the same ignorance of self, the same dream of strength, the same disregard for God's holiness and man's helplessness?

Though Israel was ignorant of her own lost condition, yet God knew it well. That is why He commanded the golden depository, which was the Ark of the Covenant, to be made, in order that it might shut out of sight the very “**ministration of death**” (II Corinthians 3:7), to which His people had so eagerly bound themselves.

In this God also foreshadowed the necessity of removing the curse of the law, in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ, even as the Holy Spirit tells us,

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

In the death of the Son of God, and in that death alone, could God remove the law, at the same time vindicating His righteousness.

He could not lower His standard. Man had no power to attain it. Neither God nor man could set it aside. The penalty for breaking it was death; and every Israelite had broken it. What, then, could be done? How could the sinner be redeemed from the curse of the law, and at the same time the law be magnified? Only by the grace of God, who Himself bore the curse for the guilty sinner.

God foreknew and foreordained the way of deliverance.

Let One be found, a Man “**made under the law**,” who should fulfill all of its requirements:

- Who, placing Himself in the sphere of the guilty, should walk with unwavering perfectness along the peculiar path of strict, unerring righteousness;
- Who among the disobedient should prove Himself obedient;
- Who among the unholy should prove Himself holy;
- Who among the rebellious should prove Himself humble, patient, dependent upon His heavenly Father.

Let such a one be found, who should “**fulfill all righteousness**,” both as to the letter and as to the spirit of the law. Let Him be the sinner’s Substitute in the place of death; and the debt of sin would be forever paid.

Israel was not only impotent to fulfill human righteousness; she had also broken the law, and had incurred its fearful curse. Before the very tables of the testimony were brought down from God, Israel was reveling in sin around the golden calf. Moses seems to have felt the uselessness, as well as the danger, of bringing the tables of the covenant into the camp. He dashed them to pieces at the foot of the mount. The curse of the broken law, therefore, had to be borne. There was no provision of mercy; there could not be; the law called for death. God foreknew all this; and He foreshadowed it in the hiding of the tables of stone beneath the mercy seat. Then —

“When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4, 5).

In His death our Lord magnified His holy law, made it honor able, and ushered in the day of grace.

“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Romans 10:4).

“Free from the law — Oh, happy condition!
Jesus hath died, and there is remission:
Cursed by the law, and bruised by the fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all!”

2. The Law Was Hidden beneath the Sprinkled Blood.

We hardly need dwell longer here upon the all-important significance of the sprinkled blood upon the mercy seat — above the law! We have sought, throughout this lesson, to keep this truth ever before us. We repeat it here, however, for emphasis. We are living in a day when the atoning blood of the Son of God is being **“trampled under foot.”** And we must earnestly **“contend for the faith.”** We must never lose sight of Calvary.

Do you not see, my Christian friend, the typical significance of the ark and the mercy seat?

God planned it, and gave Moses the pattern for it, in order to point the sinner on to Christ. In Him the law was carefully preserved — out of sight; removed by His matchless grace. He came to do His Father’s will; He delighted in doing it; and having died in the fulfillment of that will, He now stands before the Father as the witness of vindicated justice. He has forever removed the stern barrier that had prevented man’s approach to God; namely, the demands against him of an unfulfilled law; so that now righteousness, which was the very hindrance, now becomes the ground of our full and free communion with God. Christ, not the law, is the “way . . . unto the Father.” God meets us in Him!

As another has expressed it, “How foolish for men to think that, by observing fragments of a broken law, they can satisfy God or justify themselves!” We cannot **“mingle law and grace”**; else **“grace is no more grace.”**

THE GOLDEN POT OF MANNA WITHIN THE ARK A TYPE OF CHRIST, THE BREAD OF LIFE FOR OUR EARTHLY PILGRIMAGE

When God fed Israel in the wilderness with the manna from heaven, He told Moses to put some of it in a golden pot, to be placed in the Ark of the Covenant. (See Exodus 16:32-36; Hebrews 9:4). The manna, like the shewbread, was a type of Christ, the Bread of Life; the golden vessel, in which it was kept, reminds us once more of His deity and glory. We need only read the sixth chapter of John to see the repeated statement of our Lord, showing that He Himself is the Heavenly Manna, the **“bread sent down from heaven.”** As the manna was Israel’s daily food in the wilderness, so Christ is Food for our daily pilgrimage, as we journey from Egypt to Canaan, from the Christless world to the Promised Land.

The manna is a beautiful type of Christ. It came down from heaven; so did our Lord and Saviour. It came in the night, while Israel slept; even as Christ came into the world in the night of sin, as men were sleeping the sleep of spiritual death. The manna was white; our Lord was spotless in His character, absolutely holy. The manna was sweet to the taste — “like wafers made with honey” (Exodus 16:31); our Lord Jesus ever bore witness to His gentle, compassionate, sympathetic love for the lost. The manna in the wilderness was seen upon the ground in the morning when the dew had disappeared; the Holy Spirit, suggested by the dew, does not manifest Himself, but presents Christ. Before Jesus died on the cross, He said to His disciples concerning the Spirit of God,

“He shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:13, 14).

But there is also “**the hidden manna**” of Revelation 2:17, which the risen Lord will give “**to him that overcometh.**” This seems to refer to our Saviour as the Food for our souls in the eternity that we shall spend in His Presence. We shall find our satisfaction, our delight, our glory in feasting upon the Heavenly Manna throughout the endless ages. Now we know Him only “**in part**”; then we shall look upon His face. “**We shall see him as he is**” (I John 3:2).

When Israel’s wilderness journey was over, the golden pot of manna was not placed in Solomon’s temple, as we have already observed earlier in this lesson. When we get to heaven when we see “**the greater than Solomon**” in all His uncreated glory, then the manna will no longer be hidden in the ark, as it were. His radiance and beauty shall shine in the New Jerusalem, filling it with His light and glory. His wonderful Person will prove to be the chiefest of the marvels, of which the apostle wrote, saying,

“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Corinthians 2:9).

AARON’S ROD WITHIN THE ARK A TYPE OF CHRIST IN HIS RESURRECTION

The sixteenth and seventeenth chapters of Numbers tell the sad story of rebellion in Israel against Aaron, God’s chosen priest, and of God’s vindication of the priestly family that came through Aaron’s line.

The sons of Korah were not content with being Levites; they wanted to be priests also; and God had specifically taught His people that none could be a priest except he be “**called of God, as was Aaron**” (Cf. Hebrews 5:4).

As a result of this gross sin, God had to send judgment upon the rebels.

“The earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up.”

“And there came out a fire from the Lord and consumed the two hundred and fifty men that offered incense” contrary to God’s express command. (See Numbers 16:31-35).

When Israel murmured against God for this righteous judgment, He sent yet further chastisement, to teach them a needed lesson; and **“they that died in the plague were fourteen thousand and seven hundred, beside them that died about the matter of Korah”** (Numbers 16:49).

Then it was that God told Moses to take twelve almond rods, one for each tribe; to write every man’s name upon his rod, **“of all their princes according to the house of their fathers”**; and to write **“Aaron’s name upon the rod of Levi”** (Numbers 17:13).

These twelve rods the Lord told Moses to lay up **“in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony,”** even in the Holy of Holies. And God said,

“It shall come to pass, that the man’s rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom: and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you” (Numbers 17:5).

Moses obeyed the Lord’s instructions; **“and the rod of Aaron was among their rods.”**

“And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness. And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness; and, behold, the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel: and they looked, and took every man his rod. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron’s rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not. And Moses did so: as the Lord commanded him, so did he” (Numbers 17:7-11).

In our study of the golden candlestick, we saw that the almond tree, the first to bud in the spring, speaks to us of resurrection. And we have seen abundant proof, from the Scriptures, that Aaron was a type of our Lord in His priestly ministry for His own.

In the story from Numbers, we find God’s vindication of Aaron as His chosen priest; and, in type, His vindication of Him of whom Aaron was but a **“shadow.”** The dry almond rod, severed from the tree, the source of life, budded and bore blossoms and fruit.

What a picture of our Lord’s resurrection from the grave, of His risen fruitfulness and glory! He was **“the corn of wheat,”** which fell into the ground and died, that it might yield much fruit — a harvest of millions upon millions of human souls! (See John 12:24).

None but the Lord God looked upon the almond rod which Moses laid up in the Holy of Holies throughout the night; none but the all-seeing eye of the Lord saw life and fruit and beauty spring into being.

The all-seeing eye of the Father in heaven witnessed Calvary's cruel cross. It beheld as the well-beloved Son was laid in Joseph's new tomb. And it witnessed the resurrection from the dead of the eternal Son of God, "**the Holy One**," whose body could see "**no corruption**" because He Himself was God.

Moses was told to place the rod in the Ark of the Covenant as "**a token against the rebels.**"

Israel's crucified and risen Messiah is now hidden from her view, but He will one day be revealed to His chosen people. In that glorious day all of Israel's murmurings will forever cease, All her rebellion and unbelief will be done away; and she will receive her King.

This seems to be the reason why, in Solomon's temple, the rod that budded was excluded from the Ark of the Covenant. The glory of Solomon's reign was but a shadow of the yet future glory of the "**Greater than Solomon.**" And in that coming day Israel's Messiah will be fully and universally owned as Israel's chosen Priest, "**called of God, a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.**"

Because Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world could not "**be holden of death,**" He became also "**the firstfruits of them that slept,**" the pledge of a greater harvest in the resurrection of His saints.

- That is why the grave holds no terror for the child of God.
- That is why we "**sorrow not as others who have no hope.**"
- That is why, in hours of sorrow and bereavement, we look up into the face of the Son of God, and know that one day He will raise our loved ones from the grave.

That is why we are able to say,

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Corinthians 15:55-57).

Concerning Israel's sin in rebelling against Aaron, as God's chosen priest; a word of warning needs to be sounded. In the Epistle of Jude the Holy Spirit likens apostates of the last days to those who have "**perished in the gainsaying of Core**" (Jude 11). ("**Core**" is the Greek spelling of the Hebrew "**Korah**").

The reference is to the rebellion and self-will of those in the day of Moses who wanted to establish their manmade priesthood. And the warning of the Holy Spirit, through Jude is unmistakable.

Any manmade priesthood today is contrary to the express will of God, as revealed in the inspired Scriptures. To go to any earthly priest in this church age, this day of grace, is to fall into the "**gainsaying of Korah.**" And besides, earthly priests today, who do not even pretend to have come from Aaron's family, set themselves up as God's representatives.

What inconsistency! What an insult to the Lord! The law of Moses (including the Levitical priesthood) was but “**a shadow of good things to come**” in Christ Jesus, our Lord. The Levitical order, the Jewish ritual, the animal sacrifices, the burning of incense — all these shadows of the cross were done away in Christ — forever done away!

God rent the temple veil in twain; and He did not intend that man should sew it together! He opened “**the way into the holiest**” by the blood of His cross. What mockery to seek a miserable imitation of something which God has forever set aside! The Lord Jesus is our Priest. We need none other! Let us beware — and warn others — of “**the gainsaying of Korah**.”

THE ARK IN ISRAEL’S LATER HISTORY

Over a long period of Israel’s history the Ark of the Covenant was closely linked with the spiritual life of the nation. To understand something of the significance God placed upon this sacred, gold-covered chest, we need to know many details in the later history of His chosen people.

We shall take only a brief glance at six important incidents, any one of which would be a lesson all by itself. There are other Old Testament references to the ark; but we mention only these here, in passing, because no study of the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat of gold would be complete without them:

1. Deliverance through Jordan.

In the third and fourth chapters of Joshua we read about the miraculous deliverance of Israel through the waters of Jordan, as the ark of the covenant went before them, to show them “**the way**” by which they should go (Joshua 3:4). Moses was dead, and God wanted to “**magnify**” Joshua “**in the sight of all Israel**,” so the people would know that he had been commissioned by the Lord to lead His people into the land of Canaan. As the feet of the priests, who bore the Ark of the Covenant, rested in Jordan, the waters stood “**upon an heap**,” while the people “**passed over on dry ground**” into the Promised Land.

The ark was the symbol of God’s power and guidance for He said,

“**Ye have not passed this way heretofore**” (Joshua 3:4).

That is why He went before them to show them the path He had chosen for them. The “**priests’ feet stood firm**” in “**the midst of Jordan**” “**until all the people were passed clean over Jordan**” (Joshua 3:17; 4:3). Through the waters of death a redeemed nation entered into the land of covenant promise.

Now the very name “**Jordan**” signifies “*river of judgment*.” It separated Canaan from the wilderness. There was no bridge above it. Israel had to go down into the river with the ark. Even so our Lord Himself went into the place of death, going before us, tasting “**death for every man**.”

By faith in His cross, we, too, are identified with Him in His death and resurrection. The ark went before Israel to show the way; our Lord is Himself “**the way . . . unto the Father.**” He went into Jordan for us.

Therefore, we can say, with David,

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me” (Psalm 23:4).

Therefore, we can sing the song of faith,

“On Jordan’s stormy banks I stand,
And cast a wishful eye
To Canaan’s fair and happy land,
Where my possessions lie.

“I am bound for the Promised Land;
I am bound for the Promised Land.
O who will come and go with me?
I am bound for the Promised Land.”

As one has beautifully expressed it, “An ark carried the elect over the water of judgment; an ark preserved an elect child from the waters of death; the Ark of the Covenant kept the law, which was ‘**the ministration of death**’ (II Corinthians 3:7)” (Rodgers).

And the Ark of the Covenant went down into Jordan before Israel. Our Lord Jesus is Himself the Ark of God. He is our Ark of Safety from the waters of judgment, the only One who could keep the law unbroken in His heart; the only “**Way**” into the Promised Land, which we call heaven.

2. Victory at Jericho.

When Joshua led Israel into the land of Canaan, the first city they entered was Jericho; and that city they did not conquer in their own strength. God gave it to them in a miraculous way. We read the story in the sixth chapter of Joshua, although the first seven chapters of this book are related to this historic event in the life of God’s chosen people.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace” (Hebrews 11:30, 31).

It was faith in the “**unseen captain**” of “**the host of the Lord**” that led Joshua and Israel on to victory; and it was the mighty power of God which won the victory for Israel that day.

His Presence in the midst of His people was symbolized by the “**ark of the Lord,**” which “**compassed the city**” of Jericho, as the priests went before that sacred gold-covered chest.

Moreover, it was in accordance with God's direct command that the ark was carried by the priests, as His people marched around Jericho once a day for six days; and seven times on the seventh day. Thus God gave to all who witnessed the strange performance an object lesson to prove to them that He Himself was with His people.

By the Presence and power of our crucified and risen Lord we may win the victory over sin and Satan and death; and by His presence and power alone. **"With God all things are possible."** For our Lord Jesus Christ is **"the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."**

3. Judgment upon the Philistines.

In chapters four, five, and six of I Samuel we read of how Israel took the ark into battle against the Philistines; how the enemy captured it, and placed it in the temple of their idol, Dagon, bringing a curse upon the Philistines; and how they returned it to Israel. The Lord God was not to be placed along with heathen gods, as if He were just another god! The ark symbolizes His Presence; the idol was miraculously thrown down and broken; and the ark supernaturally returned to the camp of Israel.

Our Lord is the only true God! Nor can He deal other than in judgment upon all who reject His Son as the only Saviour!

4. Death for the Men of Bethshemesh.

When the ark was miraculously returned to Israel, the men of Bethshemesh did a very wicked thing. They **"looked into the ark of the Lord"**; and 50,070 men died because of this sin. (See I Samuel 6:19). They put aside the mercy seat! Legalists always put aside the mercy seat, a most dangerous thing to do!

"Do not uncover that which God has covered up!"

Another illustration of careless handling of the sacred Ark of the Covenant is seen in the sixth chapter of II Samuel. David wanted to take the ark to Jerusalem; that was not displeasing to God. But he did a good thing in the wrong way; for, instead of having the sacred ark carried by the priests, he put it **"upon a new cart."** Then when the oxen shook it, and when Uzzah put forth his hand to touch it, he was smitten dead for presuming to touch this sacred Ark of the Covenant.

"The way into the holiest" had not yet been opened by the blood of Jesus; and the ark was the symbol of God's Presence. For man to treat it lightly was to sin against God, to disobey His commands. Even service for the Lord must be done in the Lord's way, if He is to be honored.

5. Glory in Solomon's Temple.

When the ark of the covenant was placed in the Holy of Holies in Solomon's temple, the staves were drawn out; only the ten commandments were left within; and **"the glory of the Lord . . . filled the house of God"** (II Chronicles 5:14).

As long as Israel had wandered in the wilderness, the staves were needed; yea, even until the beautiful temple was built for the ark of the Lord. But the wanderings over, the ark was placed upon the golden floor of the Most Holy Place. And Solomon's temple was just a prophetic picture of the glory of heaven itself.

When our pilgrimage is over, we shall no longer need the staves, as it were; we shall **"hunger no more,"** for we shall be in the very Presence of Him who is the Heavenly Manna; we shall not need a Mediator any more, for our risen Priest is our coming King.

That, it seems, is why the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod were not left in the ark when it was put in Solomon's temple. Only the tables of stone were there; and in heaven God's holy law will forever be unbroken!

- Instead of the desert sands, there will be the streets of gold.
- Instead of sorrow and heartaches, there will be **"no more tears."**

All heaven will be **"filled with the glory of the Lord";** and **"the Lamb is the light thereof."**

6. Desecration in Nebuchadnezzar's Hands.

The time came when Israel went into gross idolatry, when she persecuted the prophets who warned her of the Babylonian captivity that was surely to come in judgment upon her wickedness.

Then the time came when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, took Judah into captivity, and **"carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, as the Lord had said"** (II Kings 24:11-13).

Just what became of the Ark of the Covenant is not clear.

Several passages of Scripture refer to the **"vessels"** from the house of the Lord. Nebuchadnezzar put them in the temple of his heathen god in Babylon (Daniel 1:2). Belshazzar and his heathen revelers drank wine from them, insulting the God of heaven (Daniel 5:14).

According to Jeremiah's prophecy, recorded in Jeremiah 27:18-22, Cyrus sent back to Jerusalem, under Zerubbabel, at least some of the vessels of the house of the Lord which Nebuchadnezzar had put in the house of his god (See Ezra 1:7-11; 7:19). But the Ark of the Covenant is not specifically mentioned in Ezra or Nehemiah.

Just what became of it, only God knows. Possibly He allowed it to be destroyed, rather than have it put in a heathen temple; for He cannot be placed along with other gods.

He is the only true God!

“THE ARK OF HIS COVENANT” IN “THE TIME OF JACOB’S TROUBLE” AND ISRAEL’S DELIVERANCE

When John saw the vision of **“The Revelation of Jesus Christ”** on the Isle of Patmos, he saw **“the temple of God . . . opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament [covenant]: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail”** (Revelation 11:19).

This verse introduces a section of the Revelation which tells of **“the great tribulation,”** called also **“the time of Jacob’s trouble.”** And the reference to **“the ark of his testament”** is a token of God’s faithfulness in His covenant-relationship with Israel. He will guard His people through that darkest period of her history; and He will take the faithful remnant safely through this time of suffering and sorrow. He cannot break His Word!

“HE IS FAITHFUL THAT PROMISED”

God never breaks His Word! Nor will He fail to meet every need of His blood-bought children, as they approach Him before the mercy seat!

The wilderness journey may seem long and weary. Thorns may be in our paths. The desert sands may burn our tired and aching feet. But glory awaits us in the New Jerusalem. And, meanwhile, we have **“the throne of grace”**!

There our risen Lord ministers to our needs. There He watches over His own.

Dear Christian friend in trouble, look up to your Mediator, your Saviour and Lord. His judgment throne has become for you a veritable mercy seat, a throne of grace, indeed. Look up, even **“unto Jesus”**; and hear Him saying unto you:

“Come, ye disconsolate, where’er ye languish;
Come to the mercy seat, fervently kneel;
Here bring your wounded heart; here tell your anguish;
Earth has no sorrows that heaven cannot heal.”

~ end of chapter 11 ~

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